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Light Verb Constructions vs. Simple Verbs in Vedic: *vimócanam kṛṇute* (RV 3,30,12d)*

1. Introduction

In my paper presented at the 2009 Sofia Indological conference,¹ I argued that the phrase *śruṣṭīm kar-* ‘to obey (lit. to make obeying)’, attested four times in the *R̥gveda* (1,69,7b; 2,14,9a; 7,18,6c and 10d) and, apart from the citation of RV 2,14,9a by the *prātiśākhya* (RP 8,33), nowhere else in Vedic, has to be regarded as a typical light verb construction or, in other words, a complex verbo-nominal predicate. Although it seems to be on the whole synonymous with the corresponding simple verb *śroṣ-* ‘to listen to, to obey’ and to be merely a stylistic variant, the actual attestations show that the verb *śroṣ-* and the construction *śruṣṭīm kar-* are in complementary distribution. While the simple verb has only present tense forms, which are attested mainly in the *R̥gveda*,² the light verb construction *śruṣṭīm kar-*

* The writing of this paper was supported by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA, project no. PD 100700) and by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. I wish to express my thanks to the participants of the Warszawa CEENIS conference, especially Danuta Stasik, Joanna Jurewicz and Sven Sellmer, for comments and discussions and to Csaba Dezső for checking my English. Any remaining shortcomings are of course mine. The abbreviations used for primary texts follow VIA, pp. 5-28; for other abbreviations, see the bibliography.

¹ Máté Ittész, ‘Light Verb Constructions in Vedic’, in *Proceedings of the Conference ‘Tradition and Modernity in Indian Culture, Indology and Teaching about India’ Held in Sofia, September 25-26, 2009*, ed. Galina Rousseva-Sokolova, Sofia, forthcoming.

² The attested forms are the following: *śroṣan* RV 1,68,9b (3p pres. inj. act.); *śroṣantu* RV 1,86,5a; SVK 1,172c = JS 1,18,8c (3p pres. imp. act.); *śroṣamāṇa-* RV 3,8,10c; 7,7,6c; 7,51,1d (pres. participle middle); on the problem of *upāśroṣat* JB 3,276 (3s imperf. act. from *upa śroṣ-* according to Johanna Narten, *Die sigmatischen Aoriste im Veda*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1964, p. 261 n. 819 and others), see Toshifumi Gotō, *Die ‘I. Präsensklasse’ im Vedischen. Untersuchung der vollstufigen thematischen Wurzelpräsentia*, SbÖAW Phil.-hist. Klasse, 489, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987, p. 317 n. 762.

forms exclusively aorist³ and perfect forms⁴ and never a present stem form. This state of affairs suggests that the light verb construction was not merely a stylistic variant of the simple verb, but did have a particular grammatical function, namely it filled in the paradigmatic gap in the inflection of the defective verb *śroṣ-*. One can speak of a suppletive relationship in terms of verbal aspect between the simple verb *śroṣ-* (forming a thematic present) and the light verb construction *śruṣṭīm kar-* (forming a root aorist and a perfect). However, this suppletion did not result in the grammaticalization of the light verb construction as the aorist and perfect of *śroṣ-*.⁵ Quite to the contrary, *śruṣṭīm kar-* completely disappeared after the period of the *Ṛgveda*, which was practically the fate of the root *śroṣ-* itself.

Another possible candidate for this kind of Early Vedic suppletion is the phrase *vimócanam kar-* ‘to unyoke (lit. to make unyoking)’, which is attested only once in the *Ṛgveda* and nowhere else in Vedic.⁶ Since the action noun *vimócana-* ‘unyoking, unharnessing’, which is itself rare in Vedic,⁷ is derived from the

³ *Kārtanā śruṣṭīm* RV 2,14,9a (2p root aor. imp. act.).

⁴ *Śruṣṭīm cakartha* RV 1,69,7b (2s perf. ind. act.); *śruṣṭīm cakrur* RV 7,18,6c and 10d (3p perf. ind. act.).

⁵ Another type of periphrastic expression with a similar history is the so-called periphrastic causative consisting of the light verb *kar-* (or sometimes *dhā-*) and an infinitive-like final dative, which occurs mainly in the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda*, e.g.: *īndram āvase kṛṇudhvam* RV 10,74,5a ‘make Indra help (you)’. These causative constructions also had a suppletive character, since they seem to have been formed originally from those verbs that, for one reason or another, could not form the morphological *-āya*-causative and the corresponding reduplicated aorist. For a short period, the two competing causative expressions were in complementary distribution, but the periphrastic causative was then suppressed by the synthetic causative before the former could be grammaticalized. On the periphrastic causative in general, see the monograph of Thomas Zehnder, *Das periphrastische Kausativ im Vedischen*, Münchner Forschungen zur historischen Sprachwissenschaft, 12, Bremen: Hempen Verlag, 2011 (with an exhaustive collection of the relevant data and many references to earlier scholarship such as, e.g., Stephanie W. Jamison, *Function and Form in the -āya-Formations of the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983, pp. 37-39).

⁶ The clause *athavāhaṃ kariṣyāmi kulasyāsyā vimocanam* MBh 1,147,13ab ‘either I will make the liberation of this family’ is registered by PW, Bd. 5, col. 1145 s.v. *vimócana-* under the meaning ‘Befreiung, Rettung’. However, this is only a *varia lectio* beside *vimokṣaṇam*, which is adopted by the Poona critical edition. Apart from this, I have not found any other occurrence of the phrase either in Vedic or in Epic or Classical Sanskrit. Because of its recent character, the occurrence of the same phrase in Mukunda Jha Bakshi’s 20th century commentary (called *Saralā*) on the *Lāṭyāyana-Śrautasūtra* (*Śrautasūtra of Lāṭyāyana [Ending with Agniṣṭoma Chapter]*, ed. with an original commentary called *Saralā* and notes by Mukunda Jha Bakshi, 2nd edn, Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 1984), in which he paraphrases *stomam vimuñceyur* LāŚS 2,11,1 ‘they should release a praise-song’ with *stomavimocanam kuryuḥ*, is completely irrelevant.

⁷ In Vedic, it is attested almost exclusively in the *Ṛgveda*. Further *saṃhitā*-attestations are *samudrāsya vimócanam* ‘unyoking of the ocean’ KS 17,17 = KKS 28,1 (which is a variant of *samudrāsya nivéśanam* ‘the ocean’s coming to rest’ RV 10,142,7b = TS^m 4,6,1,3, etc.), and *vimócanam*

verb *ví moc-* ‘to unharness, to unyoke; to release, to untie’, I will first examine the morphosyntactic and semantic characteristics of the latter and then I will try to clarify the relationship between the simple verb *ví moc-* and the light verb construction *vimócanam kar-*. In what follows, I will concentrate mainly on the grammar of the *R̥gveda* from a synchronic point of view and will focus on later texts only at the end of my paper, assuming that the latter are based on a more or less different synchronic grammar.

2. The Diatheses of *moc-* in the *R̥gveda*

As far as the simplex verb *moc-* is concerned, it is the category of verbal diathesis or voice that is relevant to our problem.⁸ Although *moc-* in general appears with both active and middle inflection, there is a very clear semantic-functional difference between the two voices in most cases. In the active voice, the verb generally has an agentive-attending meaning⁹ (‘to loose, to let loose, to release, to set free’) and is syntactically transitive. For example:

- (1) *muñcāmi tvā haviṣā jīvanāya kām* 10,161,1a ‘I set you free with oblation so that you may live’ (1s pres. ind. act.)
 (2) *yó vo mahyā abhíśaster āmuñcat* 10,30,7b ‘who set you free from the great disgrace’ (3s imperf. act.)

The usage of the middle is more complicated. The middle forms of the reduplicated perfect (9,29,5c; 10,111,9c) have a patientive/fientive-inattending meaning¹⁰ (‘to be loosed, to be set free or released’) and are syntactically intransitive:

- (3) *nidó yātra mumucmahé* 9,29,5c ‘where we are / have been set free from blame’ (1p perf. ind. middle)

evá tát ‘this is really unyoking’ TS^p 7,5,1,5. Here and later in the paper, my data concerning the attestations are based on the respective volumes of the VWC and checked in the primary texts.

⁸ For the terminology used in the following discussion, consult Gotō, *I. Präsensklasse*, pp. 25-29 and Martin Joachim Kümmel, *Das Perfekt im Indoiranischen. Eine Untersuchung der Form und Funktion einer ererbten Kategorie des Verbums und ihrer Weiterentwicklung in den alt-indoiranischen Sprachen*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2000, pp. 6-7. For all the occurrences of the verb *moc-* in the *R̥gveda*, see, apart from VWC, Alexander M. Lubotsky, *A R̥gvedic Word Concordance*, vol. 2, New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1997, pp. 1078-1079 (s.v. *muc*).

⁹ I.e. the first actant is the agent and the action controlled by him immediately affects another actant.

¹⁰ I.e. the first actant is either the patient of an action carried out and controlled by another actant or there is no controller or the person of the controller is irrelevant.

- (4) *múmuṣamāṇā utá yá mumucre* 10,111,9c ‘those who wished to be set free and who have been set free’ (3p perf. ind. middle)¹¹

The middle forms of the aorist¹² behave similarly to those of the perfect. They can also have a patientive/fientive-inattent meaning (7,59,12d; 10,87,19d). For example:

- (5) *mṛtyór muṣṭiya* 7,59,12d ‘may I be released from death’ (1s s-aor. opt. middle)

However, there exist also aorist middle forms with agentive-attent meaning, which are syntactically transitive. In these cases, the verb is generally combined with *prāti* (5,55,6b; 7,59,8c; 10,27,11c), which inverts the direction of the action¹³ (‘to put on, to take on, to assume < *to release sg back onto oneself’), the middle having an indirect-reflexive / affective¹⁴ meaning.¹⁵ For example:

- (6) *hiranyāyān prát,y átkāṁ ámuḡdhvam* 5,55,6b ‘you have put on your golden garments’ (2p root aor. ind. middle)

¹¹ Note also that in this passage the desiderative middle participle (nom. plur. fem. *múmuṣamāṇās*) is used with the same patientive/fientive-inattent sense (‘wishing to be set free’).

¹² On the morphological interpretation of the aorist forms, see Narten, *Die sigmatischen Aoriste*, p. 194.

¹³ Cf. Martin Joachim Kümmel, *Stativ und Passivaorist im Indoiranischen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996, p. 84 n. 147 (‘Gegensatz zum Simplex’).

¹⁴ I.e. the first actant is also the recipient or beneficiary of the action carried out by him. The only exception would be *kataró mením prāti tám mucāte* 10,27,11c (3s them. aor. subj. middle), where *prāti moc-* is generally taken as meaning ‘to dismiss, to throw onto, to cast onto’ (cf., e.g., the translation of Karl F. Geldner, *Der Rig-Veda. Aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt und mit einem laufenden Kommentar versehen*, Harvard Oriental Series, 35, Bd. 3, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951, p. 167: ‘Welcher von beiden wird seinen Zorn auf ihn werfen?’). I shall try to demonstrate elsewhere that this is only a seeming exception and the passage can be interpreted with the usual indirect-reflexive / affective meaning of the middle of *prāti moc-*. On *vī mucadhvam* see the argumentation below.

¹⁵ The middle of *prāti moc-* is used in the same way in the AV: e.g., *tám agnīḥ prát,y amuñcata* ‘Agni put on this’ AV 10,6,6c+ (3s imperf. middle); *rāyās póṣāya prāti muñce ahám tvām* ‘I put you on for increase of wealth’ AV 19,31,13e (1s pres. ind. middle). Cf. also the indirect-reflexive meaning of the middle (cf. Berthold Delbrück, *Altindische Syntax*, Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1888, p. 247: ‘das sog. dativische m[edium]’) of *úd moc-* ‘to let loose from oneself’ and *úpa moc-* ‘to put on oneself’ attested later (*úd moc-* middle MS 3,2,1,4; ŚB 6,7,3,8; *úpa moc-* middle TS 5,4,4,4; 5,6,6,1; ŚB 5,4,3,19; 5,5,3,7; TB 1,7,9,4; AVP 19,37,4).

As far as the present tense forms are concerned, the verb *moc-* has two different present stems. The exclusively medially inflected intransitive *-ya-* present *múc-ya-* (1,31,4c; 8,69,13,d; 10,27,24d) has a fientive/patientive-inattingent meaning.¹⁶ For example:

(7) *sá pādúr asya nirñjō ná mucyate* 10,27,24d ‘this foot of his breaks free as if from a garment’ (3s pres. ind. middle)

The very common nasal-infixed 6th class present stem (*muñc-á-*) is inflected in both voices, but it is important that its active, which is far more frequent, as well as its middle generally have an agentive-attingent meaning in the *Rgveda*. However, the present middle *muñc-á-te* is always combined with a preverb, which is usually (2,17,2d; 4,53,2b; 5,81,2a; 9,100,9c) *práti* (‘to put on, to assume’, cf. above the aorist middle forms with *práti*) and once (10,38,5c) the double preverb *prá pári* (‘to release oneself, to free oneself’ in direct-reflexive sense¹⁷). For example:

(8) *práti drāpím amuñcathāḥ* 9,100,9c ‘you put on your garment’ (2s imperf. middle)

(9) *prá muñcasva pári kútsād* 10,38,5c ‘release yourself from Kutsa’ (2s pres. imp. middle)

To summarize the usage of the different voices of the various aspect stems, the verb *moc-* always has an agentive-attingent meaning in the active voice, while in the middle its meaning is mostly fientive/patientive-inattingent. However, even the middle, if it has particular preverbs (*práti* and *prá pári*), can be used in the agentive-attingent sense, but in this case it shows (either direct or indirect) reflexivity at the same time.

3. *Ví moc-* in the *Rgveda*

The verb *moc-* occurs very often with the preverb *ví* in the *Rgveda* (21x: 1,24,13d; 1,171,1d; 1,177,4d; 2,28,4c; 2,28,6c; 2,38,3a; 3,32,1d; 3,34,1c; 3,35,3c; 3,41,8a; 4,12,6c; 5,2,7d; 5,62,1b; 6,40,1b; 7,88,7b; 7,91,5d; 10,94,14c; 10,104,1c;

¹⁶ Cf. Kümmel, *Stativ und Passivaorist*, pp. 83–84, who also deals with the aor. passive *amoci*, which is attested twice in the *Rgveda* (5,1,2d; 10,107,1b).

¹⁷ That the middle is agentive with a direct reflexive sense in sentence (9) is indicated by the use of the imperative mood, which shows that the action is controlled by the first actant.

10,126,8c; 10,138,3a; 10,160,1b). By and large, the behaviour of *ví moc-* ‘to unyoke, to unharness; to release, to untie’ fits into the general picture sketched above about the voices of *moc-*, but there are some exceptional cases that need some comment.

First, there is a peculiar 2p thematic aorist imperative middle form (*ví mucadhvam*), which unexpectedly has an agentive-attendant meaning without direct or indirect (affective) reflexivity, a meaning that is otherwise usually expressed by the active.¹⁸ I will return to this important form later.

(10) *ní hélo dhattá ví mucadhvam áśvān* 1,171,1d ‘suppress your anger, unyoke the horses’¹⁹ (2p them. aor. imp. middle)

The 2s reduplicated injunctive *ví mumucas* (used as a prohibitive with *mā*) is enigmatic.

(11) *māré asmád ví mumuco* 3,41,8a (= AVŚ 20,23,8a) ‘do not unyoke far from us’

It probably has an agentive-attendant semantics (cf. below on the elliptical direct object), but its precise morphological interpretation remains problematic. While some take it as an active form of a reduplicated present²⁰ or the perfect,²¹ it has recently been classified by Kümmel as a perfect middle.²² Another possibility might be to restore a metrically more fitting **ví mūmucas* with a long reduplicative vowel in the iambic *gāyatrī* cadence, which could be a 2s reduplicated aorist injunctive active.²³ However, this reduplicated aorist is actually attested only much later, in Classical Sanskrit.²⁴ The first attestation I know of is found in a 5th

¹⁸ See, e.g., the following passages that involve an active form of *ví moc-* with the same meaning: *ví mucā hārti ihā* 1,177,4d ‘unyoke the bay (horses) here’ (2s them. aor. imp. act.); *grāsetām áśvā ví mucéhā* (Pp. *mucā ihā*) *śōṇā* 3,35,3c ‘let the horses eat, unyoke the reddish (horses) here’ (2s them. aor. imp. act.).

¹⁹ This passage is cited by Kümmel, *Perfekt*, p. 382 in order to show that the middle of *moc-* can have an agentive-attendant meaning without any semantic difference with respect to the active.

²⁰ E.g., Paul Thieme, *Das Plusquamperfectum im Veda*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1929, pp. 42, 52.

²¹ E.g., Lubotsky, *Concordance*, vol. 2, p. 1078.

²² Kümmel, *Perfekt*, pp. 381-382. An important argument for Kümmel is that there are other middle forms of *ví moc-* with agentive-attendant meaning in Vedic (cf. n. 19 above). As I will show below, this is an invalid argument concerning the synchronic grammar of Early Vedic.

²³ This possibility is raised but rejected by Kümmel, *Perfekt*, p. 382.

²⁴ Even the related causative *mocáyati* is attested only from Epic Sanskrit onwards (cf. *PW*, Bd. 5, col. 812-813).

century AD Vākāṭaka-inscription: *amūmucat* 3s ind. act. *CII*, vol. 5, no. 27, line 17²⁵ (cf. further *amūmucat* 3s ind. act. BhāP 8,1,31; 8,3,33; 12,13,21; *amūmucan* 3p ind. act. BhāP 6,2,20). Because of these problems,²⁶ I will disregard *vī mumucas* in the following discussion concerning verbal diathesis.

There are three (or perhaps four) passages in the *Ṛgveda* in which some semantically agentive active form of *vī moc-* is used with an apparently inattending meaning and syntactically without a direct object (i.e. as intransitive). In these cases, it could be simply translated as ‘to halt, to rest, to take a rest, to retire’.

- (12) *āsúbhiś cid yān vī mucāti nūnām* 2,38,3a ‘even who rides on swift (horses) should take a rest now’ (3s them. aor. subj. act.)
- (13) *nā śrāmyanti nā vī mucant.y eté* 2,28,4c ‘these (scil. the rivers, cf. 4b) do not get tired and do not rest’ (probably 3p pres. ind. act. for **muñcanti*²⁷)
- (14) *ádha prīṇāná vī mumuktam asmé* 7,91,5d ‘thus, being pleased, take a rest (scil. Indra and Vāyu) among us’ (2d perf. imp. act.)²⁸

It seems to be better to assume that these forms are in fact attending, but the direct object, namely the animals (i.e. horses) unyoked, is elliptical and has to be supplied²⁹ from the context, where these animals are either explicitly mentioned (*āsúbhiś* 2,38,3a ‘on swift [horses]’;³⁰ first member of voc. *hāripriya* 3,41,8b ‘dear

²⁵ Vasudev Vishnu Mirashi (ed.), *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, 5, Ootacamund: Government Epigraphist for India, 1963, p. 126 (see p. 121 on the dating of the inscription). This attestation was brought to my attention by Csaba Dezső.

²⁶ A possible clue to these problems would be (in accordance with the findings of Karl Hoffmann, *Der Injunktiv im Veda*, Heidelberg: Winter, 1967, pp. 43–106) if we could tell whether the prohibitive *mā ... vī mumucas* has a preventive sense (as an aorist) or an inhibitive sense (as a present or perfect). However, the interpretation of the prohibition is ambiguous. While Hoffmann, *Injunktiv*, p. 83 thinks that it is an inhibitive, by which the speaker wants to inhibit a repeatedly occurring action (*‘spann nicht [immer wieder] fern von uns aus!’*), I think that the context should rather be interpreted as referring to a particular situation (note the use of the proximal demonstrative pronoun *idām* in *imā* 3a; *eṣū* 4b) and thus *mā ... vī mumucas* could be a preventive (cf. also Kümmel, *Perfekt*, p. 382).

²⁷ Cf. Lubotsky, *Concordance*, vol. 2, p. 1078.

²⁸ The fourth example might be *māré asmād vī mumuco* ‘do not take a rest far from us’ 3,41,8a treated above, if *mumucas* is in fact an active form.

²⁹ Cf., e.g., the translation of 3,41,8a by Kümmel, *Perfekt*, p. 381 (*‘Spanne nicht fern von uns [deine Zugtiere] aus!’* [bold in the original]) and the meaning given by Hermann Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1955, p. 1048 (*einkehren [eigentlich Rosse abspannen], rasten*).

³⁰ The exact translation of sentence (12) would then be: ‘even who rides on swift (horses) should now unyoke (them)’.

to or loving bay [horses]'; *hāribhyām* 3,41,1c 'on bay [horses]') or implicitly present (*sarātham yātam* 7,91,5b 'come on the same chariot', which is, naturally, pulled by horses). It is only in 2,28,4c that *vī moc-* is used metaphorically, since here its subject is the rivers (*sīndhavo* 2,28,4b). It is the rivers who 'do not unyoke (their horses)', i.e. do not take a rest, since they do not get tired (*nā śrāmyanti*).

All this means that (not taking into account *vī mumucas* 3,41,8a, which is problematic in terms of diathesis) the prefixed verb *vī moc-* is with one exception (*vī mucadhvam* 1,171,1d) always inflected in the active and it always has an agentive-attingent meaning. Its apparently inattingent meaning in the three (or four) passages just mentioned is merely due to the syntactical ellipsis of its direct object.

4. Metre and Formulas: *vī mucadhvam áśvān* RV 1,171,1d

Having all this in mind, the phrase *vī mucadhvam áśvān* with the aorist middle, which is repeated here for convenience, becomes even more striking.

- (15) *nī hélo dhattá vī mucadhvam áśvān* 1,171,1d 'suppress your anger, unyoke the horses'

However, it is crucial to take into account the metrical context of this verb form:

- (16) *nī hélo dhattá vī mucadhvam áśvān*

◡ — — — ◡◡ ◡◡ | —8 ◡◡ —10 —11

The preverb *vī* is placed immediately after the late caesura of the trimeter (*triṣṭubh*) verse and is followed by the trisyllabic *mucadhvam*. The *pāda* is closed by the object complement of the verb. If we look at other occurrences of *vī moc-* in the *Ṛgveda*, we can immediately realize that in quite a few passages the same position (6th syllable) of an 11-syllable verse is occupied by *vī* followed by a trisyllabic active (!) form of *moc-*, while the last two syllables of the cadence are, similarly to our case, occupied by the direct object (or sometimes by some other modifier or the subject):

- (17) *sū'ryasya yātra vimucánt,y áśvān* 5,62,1b —◡◡◡'◡◡ | —◡◡ — 'where they unyoke the horses of Sūrya'³¹ (probably 3p pres. ind. act. for **vimuñcānti*³²)

³¹ Note the same complement *áśvān* as in 1,171,1d!

³² Cf. Lubotsky, *Concordance*, vol. 2, p. 1078.

- (18) *vidvāṁś ádabdho ví mumoktu páśān* 1,24,13d – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘let the wise and undeceivable release the bonds’ (3s perf. imp. act.)
- (19) *dāmeva vatsād ví mumugdhi áṃho* 2,28,6c – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘like a cord from a calf, untie the distress (from me)’³³ (2s perf. imp. act.)
- (20) *evāsmád agne ví mumugdhi páśān* 5,2,7c – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘unbind the bonds thus from us, o Agni’ (2s perf. imp. act.)
- (21) *āśúbhiś cid yān ví mucāti nūnām* 2,38,3a – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘even who rides on swift (horses), should now unyoke (them)’ (3s them. aor. subj. act.)
- (22) *ádha prīṇāná ví mumuktam asmé* 7,91,5d – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘thus, being pleased, take a rest among us’ (2d perf. imp. act.)
- (23) *ná śrāmyanti ná ví mucant,y eté* 2,28,4d – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘these do not get tired and do not rest’ (prob. 3p pres. ind. act. for **muñcanti*)³⁴

Cf. also the following examples with the same position of *ví* followed by a disyllabic active form of *moc*:-

- (24) *áva sya hárt ví mucā sakhāyā* 6,40,1b – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘unharness the bay (horses), unyoke the companions’ (2s them. aor. imp. act.)
- (25) *grāsetām ásvā ví mucéhā* (Pp. *muca ihā*) *śónā* 3,53,3c – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘let the horses eat, unyoke the reddish (horses) here’ (2s them. aor. imp. act.)
- (26) *priyā sakhāyā ví mucópa* (Pp. *muca úpa*) *barhís* 3,43,1c – – – – ‘ – – – – | – – – – ‘unyoke the dear companions; to the sacrificial grass (...)’³⁵ (2s them. aor. imp. act.)

It is important to see that the corresponding 2p active form of the thematic aorist (*ví mucata*) would yield a wrong metre in the *triṣṭubh* cadence of 1,171,1d, even when pronounced with hiatus before the following *á°* vowel instead of the more common *praśliṣṭasamdhī* in order to preserve the correct number of syllables:

- (27) ... *ví mucata ásvān* ... ‘ – – – – | (°) – – – –

³³ Salvatore Scarlata, *Die Wurzelkomposita im R̥gveda*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1999, p. 389 raises the possibility that in 2,28,6c (as well as in 4,12,6c = 10,126,8c), *áṃho* (*ámhas*) at the end of the verse is haplogical instead of the regular ablative *ámhasas* ‘from the distress’. This is contradicted by the fact that in 4,12,6c = 10,126,8c the clause already has an ablative (*asmád*), while in 2,28,6c it is the parallelism with the simile that makes clear that *ámhas* must be an accusative.

³⁴ Cf. Lubotsky, *Concordance*, vol. 2, p. 1078.

³⁵ *Úpa barhís* ‘to the sacrificial grass’ probably belongs to *t_uvām imé havyavāho havante* ‘these oblation-bearers call you’ in *pāda* d (cf. Geldner, *Rig-Veda*, Bd. 1, p. 385 with the note ad loc.).

Therefore, it seems likely that the middle form *ví mucadhvam* is a metrically conditioned nonce formation (*Augenblicksbildung*) of the poetic grammar,³⁶ the creation of which was prompted by the above-mentioned formulaic phrases containing active forms with a similar metrical pattern.³⁷

To summarize the preceding discussion, the prefixed verb *ví moc-* was in the synchronic grammar of Early Vedic (i.e. in the *Ṛgveda*)³⁸ a verb with exclusively active inflection.³⁹ It did not have middle forms,⁴⁰ even if the use of an indirect-reflexive possessive (Kümmel) or possessive-affective (Gotō) middle⁴¹ would be entirely imaginable, for instance, if a person unyokes his own horse or horses from his own chariot or yoke. Our data clearly show that such a semantic nuance was not expressed by the possessive(-affective) middle of *ví moc-* in Early Vedic (nor until Late Vedic, as will be demonstrated below).⁴² As can be seen from the

³⁶ Another way of adjusting the metrically unfitting active form *ví mucata* to the metrical pattern of the verse could have been the inversion of the verb and its object (... *mucatā vṛ āśvān* ... ◡◡|◡◡—), a strategy that can be seen in 4,12,6c = 10,126,8c: *evó ṣṣv āsmān muñcatā vṛ āmhaḥ* —◡◡◡◡—'◡◡|◡◡— 'in that way untie the distress from us well'. In our case, the inversion was perhaps avoided and the original word order retained by analogy with 5,62,1b (...*ví mucadhvam āśvān* 1,171,1d ~ ... *vimucānty āśvān* 5,62,1b).

³⁷ A similar metrical reason is responsible for the creation of the 2s pres. inj. middle *yuyothāḥ* 2,33,1b instead of the regular active **yuyoh* (Hoffmann, *Injunktiv*, p. 90; Kümmel, *Perfekt*, p. 402).

³⁸ For a periodization of Vedic, see Kümmel, *Perfekt*, pp. 5–6.

³⁹ Apart from the finite forms with active inflection (and the exceptional finite middle *ví mucadhvam* treated above), *ví moc-* forms only an absolutive in the *Ṛgveda* (*vimūcyā* 1,104,1c; 3,32,1d). The verb *ví cart-*, which is synonymous with *ví moc-* (cf. the variation between AV 6,112,3a-c: *yébhiḥ pāśaiḥ* ... *ví té mucyantām* 'the bonds with which ... , let them be loosened' and AVP 1,70,4c: *ví ... cṛtyantām*), is also inflected in Vedic exclusively in the active if it has agentive-attributive meaning: e.g., *ví ... cṛtānti* RV 1,67,8a (3p pres. ind. act.); *ví cṛtāmi* and *ví cṛtāmasi* AV 9,3,1d+ (1s and 1p pres. ind. act.); *ví ... cṛtā* RV 1,25,21b; *ví cṛta* AV 6,112,1c (2s pres. imp. act.); *ví cacarta* AV 14,1,56d = AVP 18,6,4d; VS 12,63 (3s perf. ind. act.).

⁴⁰ I think that the sufficiently great number of occurrences (21 times; cf. above) make it more than probable that the absence of the middle is not just due to chance.

⁴¹ I.e. the action is directed onto something that belongs to the first actant (the agent). For the terminology, see again the references mentioned above in n. 8.

⁴² I stress this in contrast to the assertion of Böhtlingk and Roth (*PW*, Bd. 5, col. 818), who are probably misled by a superficial interpretation of 1,171,1d when they give the following meaning of *ví moc-*: *ablösen, losbinden, befreien; med. an sich oder für sich Etwas ablösen, z. B. die eigenen (Pferde) abspannen* (emphasis mine). Monier Williams (*MW*, p. 980) presumably follows *PW*: *to unloose, unharness* (Ä. 'one's own horses') (emphasis mine). Cf., on the other hand, the correct statement of Vaman Shivram Apte, *A Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, revd and enlarged edn, vol. 3, Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1959, p. 1458 s.v. *vi-muc-*: '6P'. This means that *ví moc-* in the *Ṛgveda* definitely did not behave like, for instance, *āva moc-* 'to loose, to take off, to cast off' in the *Atharvaveda*, which has an agentive-attributive middle with a specific possessive-affective meaning (contrary to the active, which is irreflexive). Cf. the clear difference between active and middle in *avamūñcān mṛtyupāśān āśastiṃ / drāghṛtā āyuh pratarāṃ te dadhāmi* (pres.

examples above, there are a considerable number of passages in which the direct object of *vī moc-* is some animal that evidently belongs to the first actant, but still the middle is not used. On the other hand, I have found no examples where the unyoked animal would belong to somebody other than the first actant.

5. The Interpretation of *vimócanaṃ kṛṇute* RV 3,30,12d

Bearing all this in mind, it is interesting to note that the light verb construction *vimócanaṃ kar-* is inflected in the middle in 3,30,12d (*vimócanaṃ kṛṇute* 3s pres. ind. middle). Admitting that it is somewhat risky to generalize and draw a conclusion on the basis of a single occurrence of *vimócanaṃ kar-*, I think it is not at all impossible that the construction *vimócanaṃ kar-* was formed beside the verb *vī moc-* to make up a suppletive paradigm with it.⁴³ Since the latter was, as we have seen, inflected exclusively in the active, its missing middle had to be supplied by the light verb construction *vimócanaṃ kar-*. *Vimócanaṃ kar-* thus filled in the paradigmatic gap of the inflection of *vī moc-*.

The next and more difficult, but also the most important, question is why the Vedic bard needed the middle in this passage instead of the active. What is the semantic surplus that could not be expressed by a regular active *vī muñcati*? For what motive did the poet resort to the middle in *vimócanaṃ kṛṇute* in his ‘poetically open grammatical system’^{44,45}

One of the interpretations of the passage has been simply that Sūrya, the Sun-god, unyokes his horses (see, for example, the interpretation of Sāyaṇa: *aśvānām*

part. active) ‘Taking off the bonds of death and the curse (from you), I further extend your life longer’ AV 8,2,2c and *út krāmātaḥ puruṣa māva patthā / mṛtyóḥ pādviṣam avamuñcāmānaḥ* (pres. part. middle) ‘Rise up from here, man, casting off the fetter of death (from yourself), do not sink!’ AV 8,1,4b.

⁴³ It could be argued that the middle *kṛṇute* in 3,30,12d is again just metrically conditioned instead of the active *kṛṇoti*. However, this claim can be rejected, since following the early caesura of a trimeter verse the pattern ∪ – ∪ (act. *kṛṇoti*) would have also been unproblematic, even if ∪ ∪ – (middle *kṛṇute*) is clearly the most frequent pattern in this position.

⁴⁴ Werner Knobl, ‘The Nonce Formation. A More-Than-Momentary Look at the *Augenblicksbildung*’, in Arlo Griffiths and Jan E.M. Houben (eds), *The Vedas: Texts, Language & Ritual. Proceedings of the Third International Vedic Workshop, Leiden 2002*, Groningen Oriental Studies, 20, Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2004, p. 262.

⁴⁵ In Ancient Greek, the verb ‘to do’ (*ποιέω*) is, apart from a few exceptions, generally inflected in the middle voice in light verb constructions (cf. Máté Ittész, ‘Remarks on the Periphrastic Constructions with the Verb ‘to Make, to Do’ in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin’, in *Indian Languages and Texts Through the Ages. Essays of Hungarian Indologists in Honour of Prof. Csaba Tóttösy*, ed. Csaba Dezső, New Delhi: Manohar, 2007, pp. 20-21 with further references), but no such rule or tendency can be observed in Vedic (cf. the case of *śruṣṭīm kar-*, which always inflects in the active).

vimocanaṃ kurute ‘makes the unyoking of the horses’ and the translation of Griffith: ‘his Steeds he looses’⁴⁶). In this case, the use of the instrumental *áśvair* causes a problem, because we would rather expect an objective genitive (*áśvānāṃ vimócanaṃ kṛṇute*) or, at any rate, an accusative⁴⁷ (*áśvān vimócanaṃ kṛṇute*⁴⁸). The only solution to save the otherwise straightforward and simple interpretation of Sāyaṇa and Griffith would be to attribute a limitative sense to the instrumental: ‘in the sphere of / with respect to the horses’, i.e. the action of unyoking is limited to the horses. However, in the *Ṛgveda*, the limitative instrumental is used generally in the case of nouns which denote something that closely and intimately belongs to the subject (physical or mental attributes or characteristics of the subject, body parts, etc.).⁴⁹ But this is apparently not the case with one’s horses.

To my mind, the only reasonable interpretation of the instrumental *áśvair* is to regard it as having a sociative sense: ‘together with the horses’ (following, e.g., Geldner and Grassmann:⁵⁰ ‘*mit den Rossen*’). But why not simply use *ví muñcati áśvair* then? As discussed previously, active forms of *ví moc-* can in fact have the meaning ‘to take a rest’, in which case the phrase could theoretically mean: ‘he takes a rest together with the horses’. However, I think that the reason for not using the apparently intransitive *ví muñcati* in this passage is precisely the presence of the instrumental *áśvair*. We have seen above that if the verb has this seemingly inattentive meaning, the animals unyoked are never mentioned explicitly in the same clause because they are already implicitly present. The phrase *ví muñcati* (scil. *áśvān*) *áśvair* ‘he unyokes (scil. his horses) together with his horses’ would be meaningless.

Therefore, I think that the middle in this sentence must have a direct-reflexive sense. Sūrya not only unyokes his horses (physically) but also himself (metaphorically); he and his horses are all released from their daily work. The instrumental

⁴⁶ Ralph T. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Ṛgveda*, ed. J.L. Shastri, new revd edn, Delhi: Motilal, 1973, p. 175.

⁴⁷ The light verb construction would in this case function syntactically as a unit equivalent to a simple transitive verb governing a direct object in the accusative. Cf., e.g., *anyāṃ vivāhaṃ kuryāt* VaiGS 6.2 ‘should marry another woman’ (cited by Albert Debrunner, *Altindische Grammatik*, Bd. II, 2: *Die Nominalsuffixe*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954, p. 258), as if *vivāhaṃ kuryāt* were equivalent to *vivahet*.

⁴⁸ Note that the accusative *áśvān* even has the same metrical pattern (– –) as *áśvair* and its use would have been metrically unproblematic if that had been the intended meaning.

⁴⁹ Heinrich Hettrich, ‘Das Projekt einer Kasussyntax des Ṛgveda: Der Instrumental’, in Heinrich Hettrich (ed.), *Indogermanische Syntax. Fragen und Perspektiven*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002, p. 54. Cf., e.g., *sthirébhir āṅgaiḥ ... / ... śukrébhiḥ pipīṣe hīraṇyaiḥ* 2.33.9ab ‘with respect to his firm limbs, he has adorned himself / is adorned with bright gold ornaments’.

⁵⁰ Geldner, *Rig-Veda*, Bd. 1, p. 365; Hermann Grassmann, *Rig-Veda*, Bd. 1: *Die Familien-Bücher des Rig-Veda*, übers. ... von Hermann Grassmann, Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1876, p. 77.

ásvair is sociative with regard to the implicit object of the reflexive middle⁵¹ (which is the same person as the subject, i.e. Sūrya). Thus, my interpretation of the passage runs as follows:

- (28) *sám yád ānaḥ ádhvana ád íd ásvair / vimócanam kṛṇute* 3,30,12cd lit. ‘when he (scil. Sūrya) has ended (his) journeys, then he unyokes (himself) together with (his) horses / makes unyoking (of himself) together with (the unyoking of his) horses’ (more freely: ‘he takes a rest together with his horses’)

6. Conclusion

Thus, the medially inflected light verb construction *vimócanam kar-* supplies the missing (direct-reflexive) middle of the simple verb *ví moc-*, since the latter was not inflected in the middle in Early Vedic.⁵²

It is also important to note that, similarly to what has been observed with regard to *śruṣṭīm kar-* vs. *śroṣ-* above, the suppletive relationship of *vimócanam kar-* and *ví moc-* did not continue in later Vedic or Sanskrit and the light verb construction was not grammaticalized in the function in which it was used in the earliest period. But while the simple verb *śroṣ-* itself practically disappeared after the *Ṛgveda*,⁵³ *ví moc-* remained a frequent verb in Vedic and Sanskrit.

Without further attestations, the phrase *vimócanam kṛṇute* can, and in fact must, be termed a nonce formation in Vedic, the attempt of a single poet to express something that could not normally be expressed by what was available for him in the grammatical conventions of the language, and an attempt that was not followed and did not become part of the Vedic language in general.⁵⁴ However, it is also important to note that this nonce formation, as shown above, worked along the same mechanism and followed the same suppletive strategy as the more frequent construction *śruṣṭīm kar-*, and in this sense, it is not at all isolated in Early Vedic.

⁵¹ Cf. the examples of Hettrich, ‘Instrumental’, pp. 51–52, in which the instrumental is sociative with regard to the (explicit) direct object.

⁵² It goes without saying that the fact that the light verb construction *vimócanam kar-* is inflected in the active in one of the variants of the MBh-passage mentioned above in n. 6 is irrelevant to the Early Vedic situation, since it is attested much later and the usage of the verbal voices is notoriously fluid in Epic Sanskrit (cf. Thomas Oberlies, *A Grammar of Epic Sanskrit*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003, pp. 129–132). The MBh-passage indicates only that (active) light verb constructions and (active) simple verbs were already semantically and functionally equivalent (i.e. merely stylistic or pragmatic variants) at that time.

⁵³ See the attestations in Gotō, *I. Präsensklasse*, pp. 316–317.

⁵⁴ Cf. the phrase ‘forerunners without a following’ used with respect to some Vedic nonce formations by Knobl, ‘Nonce Formation’, p. 262.

7. Appendix: The Middle of *ví moc-* in Middle and Young Vedic

We can briefly touch upon the changes that the usage of the voices of *ví moc-* went through in later stages of the Vedic language. The middle of this verb is, apart from *ví mucadhvam* treated above, attested first in Middle Vedic (*vimuñcate* 3s pres. ind. middle and *vimuñcamāneṣu* pres. part. middle loc. plural masc. of the nasal-infixed 6th class present), but only in a single *saṃhitā* prose⁵⁵ passage of the Black *Yajur Veda*:

- (29) *yó vā agnīm vimoká āgate ná vimuñcáte ná vimuñcamāneṣu vimuñcate ví te muñcāmi raśanām ví raśmīn ity agnīm vā etád vimoká āgate vimuñcate ví muñcamāneṣu muñcate* MS 3,4,5 ‘he who does not unyoke the fire-altar when the (time for) unyoking has arrived, he among those who unyoke does not (really) unyoke (it); (but who) unyokes the fire-altar with this: “I untie your cord, your strings” when the (time for) unyoking has arrived, he among those who unyoke (really) unyokes (it)’⁵⁶
- (30) *yo ha vā agnīm vimoka āgate na vimuñcati na vimuñcamāneṣu vimuñcate ... ity agnīm evatád vimoka āgate vimuñcati vimuñcamāneṣu vimuñcate* (KS *vi vimuñcamāneṣu muñcate*) *ya evaṃ veda* KKS 34,1 ≈ KS 22,6 ‘he who does not unyoke the fire-altar when the (time for) unyoking has arrived, he among those who unyoke does not (really) unyoke (it); “...” with this he unyokes the fire-altar when the (time for) unyoking has arrived; he who knows thus among those who unyoke (really) unyokes (it)’⁵⁷

It can be seen that in the *Kaṣiṣṭhala-Kaṭha-* and the *Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā* version of the text the middle is used only when there is no explicit direct object (*na vimuñcamāneṣu vimuñcate*; *vimuñcamāneṣu vimuñcate* KKS ≈ *vi vimuñcamāneṣu muñcate* KS). When there is a direct object explicitly mentioned, the active is used instead (*yo ... agnīm ... na vimuñcati*; *... ity agnīm ... vimuñcati*). I suspect that this might have been the original form of the text and the middle forms we have in the MS version in the clauses *yó ... agnīm ... ná vimuñcáte* and *... ity agnīm ... vimuñcate* are due to the analogy of the middle forms of the clauses without an explicit direct object⁵⁸ (*ná vimuñcamāneṣu vimuñcate*; *ví muñcamāneṣu muñcate*).⁵⁹

⁵⁵ There are no YV-mantra occurrences of the middle pace VWC.

⁵⁶ The translation follows Hanns Oertel, *The Syntax of Cases in the Narrative and Descriptive Prose of the Brāhmaṇas*, Heidelberg: Winter, 1926, pp. 169-170, with only minor changes.

⁵⁷ Translation following Oertel, *The Syntax of Cases*, pp. 169-170.

⁵⁸ Even if the MS is in general older than the KS and the KKS (cf. Kümmel, *Perfekt*, p. 5).

⁵⁹ Or is the use of the middle forms (*vimuñcate* and *vimuñcamāneṣu*) in this passage on the whole (i.e. in all three versions) just due to the analogical influence of the preceding passage, which

The middle of *ví moc-* has been attested more frequently since the *brāhmaṇa*-phase of Middle Vedic, but even in this phase it never appears with an explicit direct object, only with an elliptical one. In most cases, similarly to the YVP-passage above, it has a metaphorical sense referring to a metaphorical ‘unyoking’ or stopping during a particular ritual. I consider it probable that this usage of the seemingly intransitive agentive middle replaced the earlier (Rigvedic) usage of the active with the elliptical direct object treated above. For example:

- (31) *sá yádi purá vasatyai vimuñcéta ánasy evágnīḥ syād* ŚB 6,8,1,12 (Middle Vedic, older *brāhmaṇa*-prose) ‘if he unyokes before (reaching) his dwelling, let the fire remain on the chariot itself’ (3s pres. opt. middle; cf. also ŚB 3,4,1,5; 6,7,4,10, etc.⁶⁰)
- (32) *atha vimuñceta bṛhatā vimuñce, vāmadevyena vimuñce, rathantareṇa vimuñca iti* JB 2,54 (Young Vedic, younger *brāhmaṇa*-prose) ‘he should then unyoke (saying): “I unyoke with (the *sāman*) *bṛhat*, I unyoke with (the *sāman*) *vāmadevya*, I unyoke with (the *sāman*) *rathantara*”’ (*vimuñceta* 3s pres. opt. middle; *vimuñce* 1s pres. ind. middle; cf. also JB 3,303)
- (33) *vy ū muñcante* AB 6,23 (Young Vedic, younger *brāhmaṇa*-prose) ‘they unyoke’ (3p pres. ind. middle)

The next, and last, stage of the process is reached in Late Vedic. Namely, the agentive-attendant middle of *ví moc-* with a more or less clear possessive-affective nuance (‘to unyoke, to release, to untie sg from oneself / from one’s own property / for oneself’) governing an explicit direct object appears no earlier than in *śrautasūtra* texts. For example:

- (34) *māteva putram iti śikyād ukhāṁ vimuñcate* VārŚS 2,1,4,19 “‘like a mother her son’ with this he unhitches the vessel from the rope-sling’ (3s pres. ind. middle)

contains middle forms of *yoj-* (*yuñkte* 3s pres. ind. middle; *yuñjāneṣu* pres. part. middle, loc. plural masc.) in a completely parallel sentence? See, e.g., the KKS-version: *yo ha vā agniṁ yoga āgate na yunakti na yuñjāneṣu yuñkte ... ityagnim evaitad yoga āgate yunakti yuñkte yuñjāneṣu ya evaṁ veda* KKS 34,1 ‘he who does not yoke the fire-altar when the (time for) yoking has arrived, he among those who yoke does not (really) yoke (it); “...” with this he yokes the fire-altar when the (time for) yoking has arrived; he who knows thus among those who yoke (really) yokes (it)’ (translation following Oertel, *The Syntax of Cases*, p. 169). Note that the verb *yoj-* ‘to yoke, to harness’ with agentive-attendant meaning is inflected in the active voice as well as in the (perhaps possessive-affective) middle already in the *Ṛgveda*. See, e.g., *yuṅgdhvām hārī ajirā dhurī vólhave* 5,56,6c ‘yoke the swift bay (horses) to the pole to drive’ (2p pres. imp. middle) vs. *hārī ráthasya dhūrṣāv ā yunajmī* 3,35,2b ‘I yoke the bay (horses) to the poles of the chariot’ (1s pres. ind. act.).

⁶⁰ Sometimes the active and the middle of *ví moc-* occur side by side in this text without any visible difference of meaning (cf. Delbrück, *Altindische Syntax*, p. 248).

- (35) *imaṃ viṣyāmīti patnī yoktrapāśaṃ vimuñcate* ĀpŚS 3,10,6; 8,8,14
 “‘I unbind this’ with this the mistress of the house unties the yoke-band
 (from herself)’ (3s pres. ind. middle)

All these observations corroborate our previous assumption that *vī mucadh-*
vam áśvān RV 1,171,1d with the middle of *vī moc-* governing an explicit direct
 object is totally isolated in Vedic before the Late Vedic period and therefore must
 be regarded as a metrically conditioned nonce formation in Early Vedic.

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